

In The Claims:

Claims 1-33. (canceled)

Claim 34. (Previously presented) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of annular elements, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; and
at least a portion of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state; wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is cut from a tube.

Claim 35. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 34, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration, and wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

Claim 36. (Canceled).

Claim 37. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 34 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 38. (Canceled)

Claim 39-41. (Canceled)

Claim 42. (Previously presented) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of interconnected annular elements, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; wherein at least a portion of the stent has a tapered configuration in the expanded state; and wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is formed from a single piece of material.

Claim 43. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 42, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration.

Claim 44. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 43, wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

Claim 45. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 44 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 46. (Canceled)

Claim 47. (Previously presented) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of annular elements including an end-most annular element at the first end and an end-most annular element at the second end, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; and
at least a portion of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state;
wherein the end-most annular element at the first end has a different degree of flexibility than the end-most annular element at the second end; and
wherein the stent is formed from a tube.